

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9638

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S E C R E T USUN 3438

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, ET

SUBJ: VIEWS OF ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. ON SEPTEMBER 24, ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWSOM CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER MENASSIE HAILE IN NEW YORK. FOLLOWING HIGHLIGHTS CONVERSATION:

2. IEG WAS SURPRISED BY NEWS OF U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM KAGNEW. WHILE SECRETARY RUSH HAD ADVISED EMPEROR THIS WAS POSSIBILITY, ACTION CAME MUCH SOONER THAN IEG EXPECTED. THEY WONDERED WHETHER THERE WAS SPECIAL REASON. NEWSOM ASSURED MINISTER REASON LAY IN CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY AND IN FACT U.S. WAS CLOSING BASES AT HOME AS WELL AS ABROAD.

3. DR. MENASSIE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD, BUT HE WAS CONCERNED THAT ABSENCE KAGNEW WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR USG TO JUSTIFY TO CONGRESS MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR ETHIOPIA, ALTHOUGH ETHIOPIA'S NEED WAS JUST AS GREAT. NEWSOM SAID US HAD ALWAYS JUSTIFIED ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA, NOT ONLY ON BASIS KAGNEW, BUT ON ETHIOPIAN SUPPORT FOR COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND BROADER STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN HORN OF AFRICA. WE WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO. MINISTER

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SAID HE HOPED DETAILED JUSTIFICATION COULD BE MADE IN

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS SO AS NOT TO CAUSE ETHIOPIA DIFFICULTY WITH NEIGHBORS AND AFRICANS. NEWSOM SAID WE ALWAYS TRIED TO RESPECT SENSITIVITIES RECIPIENT NATIONS, BUT IT NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE. DR. MENASSIE REALIZED THIS, CITING SYMINGTON COMMITTEE HEARINGS AS EXAMPLE.

4. NEWSOM STRESSED ASSURANCES OF CONTINUED U.S. INTEREST CONVEYED TO EMPEROR BY CHARGE. MINISTER SAID THESE WERE APPRECIATED, BUT CONCERN OVER ACTUAL LEVELS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE CONTINUED. NEWSOM SAID WE WOULD TRY TO MAINTAIN AT PRESENT LEVELS AND THAT ADVICE ON THIS WOULD SHORTLY BE SENT TO ADDIS TO BE CONVEYED TO PRIORITIES COMMITTEE. MENASSIE SAID HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO BE ADVISED AND ASKED WHAT PROPORTION OF TOTAL REQUEST MIGHT BE MET. NEWSOM REPLIED ANSWER WAS NOT IN THESE TERMS BUT WAS IN TERMS OF PRIORITY ITEMS.

5. MINISTER SAID HE HOPED USG WOULD ACTUALLY SEE ETHIOPIA'S POSITION IN GLOBAL STRATEGIC TERMS SINCE REAL PROBLEM WAS SOVIET POSITION IN SOMALIA. SOVIETS WERE USING THIS AS LEVER TO BRING CHANGES IN ETHIOPIA'S POSITION AND HAD RESPONDED TO IEG OVERTURES BY PLACING THEIR AID TO SOMALIA IN JUXTAPOSITION WITH U.S. AID TO ETHIOPIA. IMPLICATION WAS THAT IF ETHIOPIA MORE FRIENDLY TO SOVIETS, PICTURE MIGHT BE DIFFERENT. CHINESE WERE ALSO READY TO HELP ETHIOPIA AS MEANS OF COUNTERING SOVIETS.

6. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON CURRENT STATUS OAU COMMITTEE ON HORN PROBLEM, MINISTER REPEATED ETHIOPIA'S REJECTION OF TERMS INCLUDING 50 KM WITHDRAWAL PROPOSED IN ALGIERS MEETING. HE SAID NEW MEETING WOULD PROBABLY TAKE PLACE IN DECEMBER. HE ADDED THAT GENERAL GOWON AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION HAD ASSURED IEG THAT THERE WAS NO SENTIMENT IN COMMITTEE FOR CHANGING BOUNDARIES BECAUSE OF TRIBAL DIVISIONS. END.
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